



Ocean Waves, Hokusai, 1760-1849

## Graphic Art

The staggering image by Hokusai, above, demonstrates that impact is not a function of complexity, but of simplicity.

Hokusai's art, like our Agitprop, was made for mass reproduction. In those days, there was no polychrome printing. Only one or two colours would be available, apart from black ink and white paper. The blocks were hand-carved out of wood, and printed "in register", one colour after another.

A modern equivalent of this kind of serial colour printing is the digital duplicator, also called a CopyPrinter. This machine is a development of the stencil (Gestetner; Roneo) process, now fully automatic and computerised. It rolls the paper flat and cold passed rotating drums from which ink is expressed through the stencil image. Different colour drums can be used to create multi-colour effects, similar to the process used by Hokusai. The [top of the range model](#) can print on both sides of the paper at a rate of up to 240 sheets per minute, although it is a small machine. This is the cheapest, fastest method of printing at the scale required by political organisations, and it allows full control.

In the years after the Great October 1917 proletarian revolution in Russia, the only available colour other than black and white was red. Yet the posters produced in the Soviet Union in those days are legendary and they are still studied everywhere.



Have you volunteered for the Red Army?, Dmitry Moor, 1920

- The above is the third of three introductory texts that are compiled into a printable booklet, [“Paint, Posters and Graphic Art”](#).
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